THE TASTING NOTES

LA TÂCHE

CLARA VOSS BOOK CLUB KIT

A spoiler-conscious guide for mystery readers, wine lovers, and curious palates

Every bottle has a story.

Welcome to Clara Voss's world - where tasting, memory, provenance, and the details people overlook can matter as much as conventional evidence.

This kit is designed to make *The Tasting Notes - La Tâche* an easy, memorable book-club choice. You do not need to know anything about wine, and no one needs to buy an expensive bottle to participate.

A note from Charles

Thank you for choosing Clara's first mystery for your book club. Wine helped inspire this series, but the heart of the story is observation: what we notice, what we miss, and the stories we tell ourselves about people and objects. I hope the questions below lead somewhere interesting - preferably with a good glass nearby.

- Charles Hollmann

Before the discussion

No wine expertise required. The first sections avoid revealing the solution, so groups can use them while reading or at the beginning of a meeting. A clearly marked spoiler section appears later.

Discussion questions

1. Clara notices details other people dismiss. Which of her observations first made you trust her instincts?

2. How does Clara's professional knowledge of wine change the way she approaches people and evidence?

3. Newport is more than a backdrop in the novel. What does the setting contribute to the mood of the mystery?

4. Julian's cellar is both a collection and a record of a life. What do you think our possessions reveal about us?

5. How did the tasting journals affect the way you understood Julian?

6. Wine collecting can involve history, memory, status, money, and obsession. Which of those forces felt most important in the story?

7. Clara often has to decide when certainty is justified and when it is dangerous. Where did you see that tension most clearly?

8. Which relationship revealed the most about Clara: Mike, Mercer, Emily, Ben, or someone else?

9. Did your suspicions change as the story progressed? What detail sent you in the wrong - or right - direction?

10. Would Clara's method of close observation work outside the wine world? What profession or skill might create a similarly unusual detective?

Taste like Clara

Pour one wine for the group without showing the label. Do **not** try to identify the producer or vintage. Instead, ask everyone to write down:

• Three things you notice immediately.

• One thing you expected but did not find.

• One detail that changes after five minutes in the glass.

• One question the wine makes you want to ask.

> *Then reveal the bottle. The point is not to be right. The point is to notice - the habit at the center of Clara's world.*

What to pour

La Tâche itself is extraordinarily rare and expensive. Your book club absolutely does not need it. The better idea is to choose a wine that opens a door into Clara's world.

Theme	Easy choice	Why it works
Burgundy connection	A Bourgogne Rouge or another Pinot Noir from Burgundy	A practical introduction to the grape and region behind La Tâche.
New World contrast	California or Oregon Pinot Noir	Compare place, ripeness, texture, and expectations without turning the evening into a test.
Clara's Napa roots	A Napa Valley wine your group enjoys	Connects the tasting to Clara's upbringing and her father's influence.
No alcohol	Tea, verjus drink, grape juice, or another aromatic beverage	Observation works without alcohol. Aroma, texture, acidity, and change over time still give the group something to discuss.

An easy Clara Voss evening

Arrival: Pour the mystery wine blind, or simply cover the label with a paper sleeve.

First 10 minutes: Everyone makes their Clara-style observations before discussing the book.

Main discussion: Use questions 1-10 above. Let the conversation wander; the goal is not to finish the list.

After the reveal: Move to the spoiler questions below once everyone is ready.

Spoiler section

Stop here if everyone has not finished the novel.

1. Looking back, which clue seems most obvious only after you know the truth?

2. How did your view of Vincent change by the end?

3. Did the explanation of Julian's death feel consistent with the behavior and pressures established earlier in the book?

4. Which character had the strongest motive in your mind at the midpoint, and why?

5. How did the rare bottle and the tasting journals function differently as clues?

6. What do you think Clara learned about the danger of being certain - especially given her earlier career-ending experience with the disputed 1961 Château Latour?

7. Which unresolved relationship or mystery are you most interested in following into Clara's next case?

Invite Charles to your book club

Reading *The Tasting Notes - La Tâche* with your group? Charles Hollmann is available for select book-club conversations, including virtual visits and local appearances on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

A visit can include a short author Q&A;, discussion of how wine became part of Clara Voss's investigative world, the choice of Newport as the setting, and a look ahead at the series - without spoiling future books.

To inquire, use the contact form at **claravosstastingnotes.com**.

For the host

Suggested invitation copy:

> *Join us for an evening of murder, mystery, and wine as we discuss Charles Hollmann's **The Tasting Notes - La Tâche**, the first Clara Voss Mystery. Wine knowledge is absolutely not required - curiosity is.*

Thank you for reading Clara's first mystery.